

# National Certification Newsletter

Vol. 1, No. 1

First Edition

Spring, 1991

*This is the first edition of a newsletter which will be published regularly by the Public Information Committee of the National Certification Council for Massage Therapists. Its purpose is to keep massage therapists and bodyworkers informed about the development of the National Certification Program and the activities of the Council. There will also be discussions of issues related to professional certification.*

*This first issue will be devoted to reviewing the basic concepts relative to professional certification and summarizing how the process has gone so far for National Certification for massage therapists and bodyworkers. The two National Certification Perspectives articles that appeared in the Massage Therapy Journal are also reprinted in this first edition.*

## Professional Certification

Professional Certification is a *voluntary* process by which a *non governmental* professional association or agency grants recognition to individuals in a certain occupation who have met specific criteria which may include training, experience and passing an examination.

### A Little History

As far back as 1949, the concept of a "national examination" for massage practitioners was promoted by members of the American Massage Therapy Association. The concept was dropped in the 1950's, but was brought to light again in the 1980's as the AMTA and the profession of massage therapy went through a period of phenomenal growth.

The force of two ideas converged in the mid-1980's to spark the present National Certification Program. One was the need for an AMTA membership entrance examination that meets current standards for professional examinations. The other was a campaign by AMTA members Susanne Carlson (OR) and Susan Rosen (WA) to initiate national certification for massage therapists.

Arguments for a national certification program for massage therapists in the last two decades of the 20th century are compelling. Although the profession has been growing by leaps and bounds through the 1980's, there are no nationally recognized credentials for massage therapists. Massage

professionals are often subject to demeaning laws designed to curb prostitution, and there is little reciprocity among the 15 states that license massage practitioners.

By late 1980's, there was also a threat to massage therapists from other health practitioners who want to limit our right to practice. Lack of a nationally recognized valid credential for the profession leaves massage therapists particularly vulnerable to legal action by physical therapists and other health care professionals.

National certification is seen as a way to address these problems. It is also a positive force for marketing massage therapy to a public looking for valid credentials, and a method for self-definition of professional massage therapists. For these reasons and others, the time seemed right to explore the possibility of development of a national certification for massage practitioners.

The National Certification Program was officially authorized and funded by the American Massage Therapy Association in 1988. Elliot

## Council Profiles

**George Kousaleos, B.A. -**

FL Director of the C.O.R.E. Institute and Member of Florida Board of Massage

**Patricia J. Benjamin, Ph.D. -CA**

Massage Therapist and AMTA Director of Education and Historian

**Susanne Carlson, M.A.T. - OR**

Rehabilitation Oriented Massage Therapist and former Chair of Oregon State Board of Massage

**Raymond Castellino, D.C. -CA**

Chiropractor and former President of the American Polarity Therapy Association

**Elliot Greene, M.A. - MD** Massage and Body Psychotherapy Practitioner and AMTA National President

**Susan Rosen, B.S. - WA**

Massage Therapy Educator and former Chair of the Washington State Licensing Board

**Jeffrey Maitland, Ph.D. - AZ**

Faculty Chair of the Rolf Institute

**Gretchen Sakofsky, M.Ed. - VT**

Director Bridgewater Therapeutics Massage School and former Director of Education of the International Association of Pfrimmer Deep Muscle Therapy

**Steven Schenkman, B.A. - NY**

AMMA Therapy Practitioner and Instructor and President of the American Oriental Bodywork Therapy Association, Chair of New York State Board of Massage

**Benny Vaughn, B.S. - FL**

Sports Massage Therapist for the University of Florida Gators, NATA Certified Athletic Trainer, Third Vice-President of AMTA

# Test Development Explained

Professional certification examinations are developed very differently from classroom tests made up by teachers. No one person or group of people just sit down and make up questions they think should be on the test.

There are detailed and specific procedures which must be followed for an examination to be considered valid and reliable. Experts in research and testing have been hired for the National Certification Program to ensure the highest quality examination.

The major steps in our process are outlined below:

### Step 1:

Researchers examine literature, school curricula, and other written sources to make a preliminary list (inventory) of entry level knowledges and skills.

### Step 2:

Researchers conduct extensive onsite interviews with massage practitioners to further refine the inventory.

### Step 3:

A panel of experts from a broad section of the field discuss the inventory, make additions, categorize items, and clarify terminology.

### Step 4:

The inventory is reviewed by other massage practitioners and refined further by researchers.

### Step 5:

The inventory of possible entry level knowledges and skills is sent to large number of massage practitioners in survey form, i.e., the job analysis survey instrument. Items are rated from "0" (not performed) to "4" (extremely important).

### Step 6:

Results of the survey are analyzed by the researchers and average ratings of each item are tallied.

### Step 7:

Test specifications subcommittee examines the items and their average ratings to determine which items were rated important enough by all surveyed to be considered the core body of knowledge for the field.

### Step 8:

Using the job analysis survey results, the test specifications committee determines what percent of the questions on the examination will be on which specific topics.

### Step 9:

Item writers from the field write questions according to the test specifications after training from the testing company.

### Step 10:

Questions are edited by the testing company to ensure that they are fair and user-friendly.

### Step 11:

Many more questions are written than are needed for one test, and are put in an item bank.

### Step 12:

Questions are drawn from the item bank according to test specifications to create a specific version of the exam. A field test is conducted before the first official exam.

### Step 13:

Each version of the examination is reviewed by committee and approved.

### Step 14:

Examination is administered.

### Step 15:

How candidates answered each question is statistically analyzed (item analysis) to pick out problem questions, e.g., too easy or not clear.

### Step 16:

Cut scores (passing scores) are determined using accepted statistical procedures.

The whole process is repeated about every five years including the job analysis survey. Some parts of the process are continuous, e.g., item writing. And some happen each time the examination is given, e.g., item analysis.

## History Cont. from page 1

Greene, then AMTA 1st vice-president, was named director of the project. Between Winter 1989 and Fall 1989, Elliot researched the process of developing a professional certification program and began to make contacts with massage therapy and certification professionals.

In November 1989, the Steering Committee was selected to oversee the first phases of development of the project. Committee members were chosen for their experience and knowledge in professional credentialing, and for committee balance in terms of various approaches to massage therapy/bodywork, geographic location, gender, and other factors. The nine Steering Committee members were: Elliot Greene, Chair, Patricia J. Benjamin, Susanne Carlson, Raymond Castellino, George Kousaleos, Susan Rosen, Gretchen Sakofsky, Steven Schenkman, and Benny Vaughn. (See Council Profile)

The Steering Committee met for the first time in Chicago in March 1990, and chose Joan Knapp and Associates to conduct the initial research for the program, called the job analysis. (see article this issue). They also began the liaison program designed to get input from massage therapy/bodywork organizations, regulating boards and schools.

The Steering Committee met two more times (May 1990 and October 1990) to complete the job analysis, develop test specifications, and discuss other issues related to the National Certification Program. Upon concluding its task of completing the job analysis, and defining a common

body of knowledge for massage therapists/bodyworkers, the Steering Committee was dissolved as planned.

It was succeeded by the National Certification Council that currently governs the Program. Elliot Greene resigned as Chair in Fall 1990, and George Kousaleos was elected as his successor by the Council. The Council is composed of Steering Committee members plus one new member, Jeffrey Maitland. (See Council Profile)

The Council met in San Diego in February 1991. The first liaison hearings were held there, and the Council discussed selection of a testing company to develop the certification examination from the results of the job analysis and test specifications. At the time of this publication, the contract with the chosen testing company, Psychological Corporation, is being negotiated.

The next meeting of the Council is expected for Fall 1991.

# Certification Calendar

A "Proposed Calendar of Key Events" has been organized by Chuck Friedman, Ph.D., Division Director of the Psychological Corporation. While the Certification Council will determine exact dates at its next meeting, here are important events for the remainder of this year and into 1992.

## 1991

### June

#### Item Writing Workshop -

Massage Therapy and Bodywork experts will write test questions that pertain to the subject areas identified in the Job Analysis Survey.

### September

#### Council Meeting and Item Review -

The Certification Council will meet to finalize plans for eligibility requirements, by-laws, National Board structure, recertification, and a complete review of the Item Bank.

### November

#### Field Test -

Three regional Field Tests, that will serve as pilot examinations, will evaluate the test questions, the test format, and the length of testing time.

### December

National Distribution of  
Candidate Handbooks

## 1992

### February

#### Content Review -

The Certification Council will review and approve the final test form.

### March

Application Deadline  
for First Test

### April

#### First Test Administration -

The First Certification Examination will be administered nationally at 40 sites.

### September

Application Deadline for  
October Test

### October

Second Test Administration

# National Certification Perspectives

## *The Public Information Committee of the Council of the National Certification Program for Massage Therapists*

Since its inception in 1988, the National Certification Program for Massage Therapists has generated considerable discussion both inside and outside of the AMTA. There has been healthy, often lively debate about the pros and cons of national certification for our profession. In fact, it is hard to think of any other single issue that has stimulated so much interaction among individuals, organizations and representatives of various approaches to massage therapy.

These interactions have brought us together as never before as opinions and feelings about national certification are aired. It has also been a learning experience for everyone as different points of view are expressed. Misunderstandings are diminished as more information becomes available, and discussions continue.

It is a sign of maturity in our emerging profession that people with different points of view are expressing their beliefs openly, and are engaging in the debate of important questions. As mature professionals, we can remain open to new information, and at the same time, "agree to disagree" about important issues.

In the past several months, the governing body for the National Certification Program (formerly the Steering Committee, now the Council) has addressed concerns heard from various individuals and organizations, including its own members. It seriously considers the questions asked and issues raised.

The ongoing discussion about the National Certification Program has been useful to the process of its development. The exchange of views serves to highlight areas needing further study and deliberation, and pinpoints areas of misunderstanding or lack

of communication. Comments from both critics and supporters are welcome and essential.

The Public Information Committee is charged with making information about the National Certification Program available including responding to concerns about the process. The following paragraphs explain aspects of National Certification that seem to need more clarification, and respond to concerns voiced in various forums where it has been debated.

### **Who actually governs the National Certification Program?**

The governing body for the National Certification Program is a group of professionals who meet specific qualifications and who are chosen to reflect the diversity of the field. The governing body is administratively independent from the AMTA, and is evolving through three stages as the Program develops.

Stage One was called the National Certification Steering Committee (see *MTJ* Winter 1990). These nine people were chosen by committee according to criteria related to their knowledge and expertise in credentialing. The Steering Committee was responsible for guiding the process through the Job Analysis.

Stage Two, currently in operation, is called the National Certification Council (composed of the original Steering Committee plus a new tenth member, Jeffrey Maitland, PhD, Faculty Chair of the Rolf Institute in Boulder, Colorado). The Council will oversee test development, create and adopt Bylaws for future governance of the Program, and make initial decisions regarding such issues as grandfathering, sitting re-

quirements, and title designation.

The final stage will happen at the point when the first Certification Examination is actually given. At this time, a National Certification Board will govern the Program according to the Bylaws adopted by the Council. Those Bylaws will also determine how the Board will be chosen.

### **Is the National Certification Program really independent from the AMTA?**

The guidelines of the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) require "administrative independence" for certifying bodies which are a division or component of a professional association. The AMTA National Board has adopted those guidelines for the National Certification Program for Massage Therapists.

What the NCCA means by "administrative independence" is that "all policy decisions relating to certification matters are the sole decision of the certifying body and not subject to approval by another body (e.g. AMTA National Board) and that all financial matters related to the operation of the certifying component are segregated from those of the professional association."

Specifically it means that the certifying body is solely responsible for decisions pertaining directly to certification such as examination content and construction, sitting requirements, cut-off scores, and test fees. The certifying body shall also "set its own budget, maintain an accounting of its funds (both income and expenditures), and not issue funds to the professional association without adequate consideration except for purposes of certification research and development and the maintenance of a reserve



fund." It shall also have independence to set its own meeting schedule, agenda and rules of procedure. A final NCCA requirement states that "administrative independence shall be assured by bylaws, with the certification component granted such independence in the bylaws of the association."

Since the National Certification Program is in the development stage, the Bylaws of the Certification Board are yet to be written. It will be the Council's job to adopt its Bylaws in the next few months.

From its inception the National Certification Program has been conducted with administrative independence to the extent appropriate stage of development. At the National Conference in Boulder (May, 1990), the AMTA National Board adopted an additional policy statement specifically acknowledging the administrative independence of the Certification Program governing body.

It should be pointed out that NCCA guidelines allow the professional association to appoint members of the governing body of the certifying agency. The AMTA did appoint the Steering Committee who governed the process through the Job Analysis. However, the Steering Committee itself chose the governing body for Stage Two, which is called the Council. The Bylaws of the Certification Board will determine how members of that Board will be chosen.

### **In what sense will National Certification be "voluntary"?**

National Certification will be voluntary in the sense that the National Certification Board can not mandate that all massage therapists become certified in order to work. Sometimes professional certification is mistakenly equated with government licensing which is not voluntary. Although the two may interact at times, they are distinct and each one can exist without the other.

One it is available, state and local governments may choose National Certification as one of their requirements for licensure or registration. It has been argued that all state governments, especially those not already licensing massage therapists, will jump at the opportunity to regulate our profession using national certification as the standard. This is highly unlikely as many states are not interested in adding more government regulation of occupations.

In addition, there are fourteen state and numerous local governments which already

regulate massage even without a national standard. Most currently licensed states have tests that were created without a job analysis survey, and many were developed by people outside of our profession. National Certification could provide these states with a national standard based on high quality research and test development, and generated by massage therapists themselves.

National Certification has also been used successfully by some professions to avoid government regulation. If a valid national standard is available and a profession is adequately self-regulated, many governments choose *not* to regulate an occupation.

It is also possible that National Certification could become so prestigious in the eyes of potential clients and employers that certified practitioners might have a market edge over others. This is especially true in unregulated areas where minimum standards of practice do not exist. Such a preference would indicate that National Certification meets a public desire for a gauge to make wise consumer choices in a free market system. Though they may want to increase their marketability by becoming certified, practitioners will still have the option of not doing so.

### **Will National Certification have a Swedish massage and medical orientation since it was initiated by the AMTA?**

The hiring of an independent researcher to conduct the Job Analysis ensured that no special interest group or specific discipline (including Swedish massage) would dominate the decision about examination content. The Job Analysis, which identified entry level knowledges and skills, was the result of input by the researchers and the Steering Committee, and finally by survey returns from over 3,000 diverse practitioners in the field. A full technical report will be available soon.

In the Job Analysis, survey respondents rated each item on a long list of possible knowledges and skills as "not important at all" to "very important" for the entry level practitioner. The items on the list included knowledges and skills from various disciplines, levels of practice, and adjunct therapies.

The data from the Job Analysis Survey revealed significant agreement on a core body of knowledge for entry level practitioners. This included client safety, anatomy and physiology, contraindications and pro-

fessional practices. The data did not rule out specialty subtests, but it did indicate that more research is necessary in discipline specialty areas. The important point is that there was high agreement among practitioners with diverse backgrounds about the core body of knowledge for entry level practice, and that it was determined by independent research.

### **How can a written examination be valid as a basis for National Certification since it cannot test for essential things like hands-on work and the more intuitive aspects of massage therapy?**

Written examinations have limitations as a basis for National Certification in a "hands-on" field. However, they do have the ability to test for the core knowledges identified as important for entry level practitioners. These knowledges are equally important to the practice of massage therapy as are physical and intuitive skills. For example, without knowledge of contraindications, it's unlikely that one could perform massage adequately over time.

Of course, it would be more complete to include a practical examination. This may eventually come about. The problem with developing it now lies in the enormous time and cost involved in research, test construction and administration of a practical exam. It is also extremely difficult to make an objective practical exam.

There is the additional danger of having one entry level practical examination which would favor one specific style or approach over others. It might be more appropriate to include a practical exam in specialty subtests developed with input from individual disciplines, or leave the practical to advanced certification programs offered through discipline organizations.

There is a legitimate concern that anyone can take a knowledge test and pass with no hands-on skills at all. This will be a problem for the Council to address as it makes decisions about "sitting requirements" for the test. One solution may be to require some hands-on experience and/or training to take the exam.

The limitations inherent in using a written exam for National Certification for Massage Therapists do not negate the positive aspects of the process as a whole. It merely points out the merit of viewing National Certification within the total context of professional development strategies which

also include accreditation of training programs and continuing education.

### **Was an assessment done to determine the need or the desire for National Certification for massage therapists?**

The need and the desire for national certification have been assessed in many ways. However, there has not been a formal process nor a specific document that summarizes those assessments.

There are actually two different questions here. Need is related to solving a problem and is best determined by an objective study of the national political, economic, social and professional climates, i.e., getting the big picture of problems and issues in the field. The question is "Will National Certification help solve some of those problems?"

Desire implies "want", usually the result of perceived need. Desire can be assessed by surveys and the number of inquiries about the program. Ultimately it will show up in the actual numbers who decide to seek national certification.

A pamphlet entitled *Update on the National Certification Program for Massage Therapists* came out in September 1989 and outlined the major reasons for embarking on the project. Although some would like to have seen it presented in a less promotional way, the needs were identified nonetheless.

National Certification was presented as a possible partial solution to several problems in our field. These include the need to have a nationally recognized valid credential, to demonstrate commitment to defining and strengthening our standards, to ease our emergence as an established health-related profession, and to provide regulatory agencies with a self-defined standard for massage therapists. Also mentioned are efforts of other professions to limit the practice of massage, and the need for national standards to encourage reciprocity between states which license massage practitioners.

A reply card attached to the *Update* brochure, which went out to AMTA members and non-members, included a short list of questions. One question asked respondents to rate "degree of interest in seeking certification." There were 2,143 people who said that they were "very interested," and 805 who were "somewhat interested" in seeking certification.

The AMTA National Board chose to start the project on the strength of perceived need

and the urging of informed members who had been working for national certification since 1985. AMTA's perception of general member support for the project was borne out in a survey about a year later.

AMTA members were asked "Do you support AMTA's efforts in establishing the National Certification Program for Massage Therapists?" Respondents answers were 76% yes, 6% no. There have been assertions that "support" does not equal "need" or "desire", but one would have to question whether people would support what they do not perceive as a need or want. Some believe that the response rate of 18% is too low to reflect the opinions of those who did not respond. Survey researchers, however, do consider 18% to be sufficient for a statistically significant sample of the entire population.

The assessment of need and desire for national certification is an ongoing process. Need and desire will increase or decrease as time goes on and the climate for massage therapy changes. Once the program is in full operation, the accuracy of the assessments so far will become apparent, i.e., to what degree National Certification helps solve the problems indicated, and how many massage practitioners seek the credential.

### **Have alternatives to National Certification been considered?**

This question has to be answered in relation to solving some problem, i.e., is it the best alternative given a problem and several possible actions? Or is it the one best solution for a constellation of problems?

To the problem of public recognition, some have suggested that individual styles of massage therapy/bodywork could develop their own standards and certification programs. Some have already started this process, which are of varying quality and validity. This solution does not present a single recognizable profession with national standards to the public, most of whom do not make any distinction between these various styles. It is also questionable whether such programs can achieve the level of quality and validity required to gain credibility as a nationally recognized credential.

Some have suggested that the AMTA should have spent the money they appropriated for national certification on a national advertising campaign to promote massage therapy. While this might make the public more aware of massage therapy, it would

create a consumer looking for credentials to make better choices and we still would have none. This solution would address the problem of awareness, but it does not provide a credential to hold out once a demand is created. It also does not address consumer protection, thus leaving many consumer issues unsolved.

A libertarian viewpoint has been expressed which resists any attempt to standardize or create credentials which might lead to or encourage government regulation of the profession. However, the absence of valid credentials and national standards in our profession seems to have created more problems than it has prevented. Some state and local governments in the United States do choose to regulate massage practitioners for their own reasons whether we want it or not. They use their own standards since none are currently available from the profession itself.

In summary, no alternative tactic will solve our problems as effectively as National Certification. It might make more sense to attack these problems from many angles simultaneously.

### **What are the dangers of National Certification?**

Some of the dangers of national certification programs in general include control of entry into the profession by one group, development of an invalid or unreliable exam, stifling of diversity and creativity, the promotion of government regulation, and divisiveness among practitioners. It is the job of the future Certification Board, individual professionals, professional societies, and the federal government to make sure these dangers are addressed.

**Control of Entry.** Control of entry into a profession by one group is prohibited by certain federal laws. Also, the guidelines of the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCAA) are designed to guard against this. Preventing control of entry is a basis for the guidelines calling for administrative independence of the certifying agency and open access to the certification (i.e., it is not limited to members of one association). They also require peer and consumer representation on the agency governing body, and a valid and reliable examination.

**Poor Exams.** The danger of an invalid and/or unreliable exam is addressed by following specific procedures and by hiring a testing company expert in developing

credentialing exams. A valid exam is one which tests what it claims to test, in our case, entry level knowledges and skills. A fear is that one style or approach, or a few people, will determine those standards for the entire field. The purpose of surveying several thousand practitioners of varying backgrounds in the job analysis was to make sure that many voices were heard in determining those entry level standards, i.e., that it represent what is actually going on in the field and not one or two persons' idea of what standards should be.

A reliable exam is one that gives consistent results, i.e., the score truly reflects what a candidate knows at the time the exam is taken. Reliability is achieved through careful writing of test questions, and statistical analysis of test results each time the exam is given. It is the job of experts in test construction, called psychometricians, to make sure an exam is valid and reliable. NCCA guidelines also require evidence that a certification exam is valid and reliable.

**Stifling Diversity.** This danger is less tangible. Setting *minimum* standards, thus laying *foundation* knowledges and skills, does not in itself prevent diversity and creativity. One solution lies in encouraging students and practitioners to go beyond the basics to develop their own unique styles, and in promoting diversity beyond the core knowledges and skills that apply to everyone. Another solution is to update and improve the certification exam on a regular basis to reflect the ongoing evolution of the field. This requires continuing research and periodic new job analyses. Certification can thus avoid stifling diversity by changing with the times.

**Government Regulation.** While promotion of government regulation is seen as a danger by some, it is seen as desirable by others. Which position one takes is largely dependent on the problems being faced by practitioners in different parts of the country, along with one's philosophical and political beliefs on the subject.

National certification would provide a national standard, developed by massage therapists themselves, that could be used in regulatory legislation. This is not the same as saying that it would encourage or necessarily lead to regulation.

Some governments choose to regulate massage therapy for their own reasons (e.g. consumer protection and adult entertainment control), and are unlikely to choose to regulate just because a national standard is available. Those opposed to government

regulation of massage therapy might be more effective focusing their efforts directly on the system of occupational licensing itself.

**Divisiveness.** There are many issues on which practitioners have differing opinions, e.g., government regulation and setting standards. This not necessarily bad. Controversy can be healthy.

"Divisiveness" however is bad for the profession, if we become divided to the point of being unable to work together for our common good while still agreeing to disagree on certain issues.

Everyone has a responsibility to guard against divisive behavior and language. Several instances of negativity have occurred around the issue of national certification, e.g., accusations of ulterior motives, and personal attacks on the integrity of individuals. It is important to stick to the issues and seek accurate information. Everyone needs to be vigilant in heading off divisiveness in this and other issues—the National Certification Council, professional societies, businesses and individuals.

The good news is that the National Certification Program has also brought diverse groups together as never before. Individuals working within the process have been able to come together and find common ground. National Certification has also been an arena for networking, learning to work with each other and developing unity around common concerns.

### Are there any other disadvantages to certification?

There are five disadvantages identified by Jerry Gilley, George Geis and Charlene Seyfer in an article which originally appeared in *Performance and Instruction*, cited in *MASSAGE* (Jan/Feb 1991).

The following are brief discussions of those points.

1. Creating divisiveness was addressed in the previous question.
2. Too much diversification within the field to have a common core of knowledge was addressed by the findings of the job analysis. An agreed upon core body of knowledge and skills was found.
3. The high cost in resources and energy to develop a fair and acceptable certification process may or may not prove to be worth it in the future. The Council estimates that the positive impact on the profession that national certification offers will be well

worth the cost. The costs have been in line with those of other similar programs.

4. The possibility of being unfairly discriminatory is avoided by adhering to NCCA guidelines.
5. Putting the profession in the role of gatekeeper is also curbed by NCCA guidelines (also see previous question on control of entry).

It is important to note that in his doctoral dissertation, Gilley stated, "Certification has emerged for several reasons: the advancement of the profession, protection for the public and the improvement of and recognition for participants in the process.

"Professionalism is a principal motive for certification. The development of a profession requires that an entry-level requirement to be instituted. Professional certification has been recognized as an acceptable evaluation device to measure competencies and entry requirements.

"...Three prerequisites are required before a certification program can be implemented. They include the development of statements of competencies, the emergence of individuals willing to assume the leadership for certification and the organization of colleagues supporting certification."

### Shouldn't National Certification wait until the profession is "better defined, fully networked and operating" with some semblance of wholeness?

Definition, networking and wholeness do not happen in a vacuum and without a place to focus. Rather than wait, perhaps indefinitely, National Certification is providing the arena and incentive for just these things to happen.

For example, the job analysis done in the summer of 1990 allowed practitioners themselves to outline the entry level core knowledges and skills for massage/bodywork, and thus help define our whole profession.

Members of the governing body for the national certification program come from varied backgrounds, and the process itself provides a means for networking. The liaison representatives had the opportunity to network at the public hearing in San Diego in February 1991, and more such hearings will be scheduled in the future.



In addition, the interest generated by National Certification has encouraged subgroups to more clearly define themselves. The National Certification program has served as a catalyst, and can also be a model, for further definition of the profession.

### **Did the job analysis survey use random sampling?**

It was determined by the researchers on the Job Analysis Committee that a purely random sample would limit the representation of disciplines and organization for which we had shorter lists. An example of a purely random sample would be to put all names gathered into alphabetical order and then choose every third name for the sample. If a particular organization submitted a list of 25 names, only some of those would end up in the sample, perhaps very few, in a random draw.

Better representation was sought from these numerically smaller groups by including their *entire membership list* in the survey.

### **Will the National Certification Board promote state licensure of massage practitioners?**

The National Certification Council (soon to be succeeded by the Board) has adopted a policy of not lobbying states which currently do not license massage practitioners. That is, they will not try to convince states to adopt licensing of massage practitioners.

They will, however, present the examination to states that already have licensing. One of the benefits of national certification is to provide a valid and reliable examination developed by massage practitioners themselves. This is attractive to states that must give exams because it is often difficult for them to develop one that meets the same level of quality.

In addition, information about the National Certification Program will be given only to those government agencies which request it.

### **What exactly is the threat to the practice of massage from other professions?**

Because the field of massage therapy is not clearly defined by national educational or practice standards, there have been some challenges to its legitimacy by physical therapists. These have occurred on a state

by state basis since occupational regulation takes place on the state level. Some examples follow.

In the state of Maryland, the Physical Therapy Board of Examiners has stopped some massage practitioners from working, claiming that they are practicing physical therapy without a license. The State's Attorney has issued over 60 cease and desist orders to massage practitioners. Investigations of two massage practitioners have been conducted, leading to criminal charges being filed against one of them so far. The Physical Therapy Board would like to limit the practice of therapeutic massage to licensed physical therapists. The AMTA has filed a law suit challenging that action. There is no statute licensing massage practitioners in Maryland.

In the state of Oregon, which has licensing of massage practitioners, the State Board of Physical Therapy is suing the State Massage Board claiming overlapping jurisdiction. Again, the claim is that the practice of massage constitutes physical therapy, and should be performed only by licensed physical therapists.

In the state of Florida, the Florida Physical Therapy Association is trying to convince state legislators to change their massage licensing law to prevent the use of the term "massage therapist." They are also threatening to block attempts by licensed massage therapists to be approved for 3rd party reimbursement for massage therapy treatment prescribed by a doctor.

In the District of Columbia, a massage therapist was forced to move her practice out of the District due to an order from the Physical Therapy Board. A massage therapist and a rolfer who did massage in a chiropractor's office were fined \$1,000 each for operating without a license. Only licensed physical therapists may do therapeutic massage under the district code.

Clearly the claims that "there is no immediate threat to the practice of massage from other professions," and that it is "practically an invisible profession" are not borne out by actual events. Massage practitioners in several states are fighting for the right to practice right now and the challenges from physical therapists seem to be growing.

## **Is National Certification for massage therapists or for bodyworkers?**

The working title of the program is the National Certification Program for Massage Therapists. The word "bodywork" first appeared in the job analysis because in surveying the current literature the researchers found the two words used almost equally and sometimes interchangeably to describe the larger field.

While everyone seems to have their own ideas about what these two terms mean, there is no clear universal understanding of either term. The final decision on a title will include considerations of public recognition, legal acceptability, marketability, as well as acceptance by practitioners themselves.

Whether the certification is for "massage therapists" or "bodyworkers" depends on your personal definitions of those terms, but does not alter the clear consensus on core knowledges and skills needed for entry level into our field.

### **Why was the original funding changed to a loan?**

The original funding actually included a provision for it to be a loan. The motion passed by the AMTA Board that approved funding for the National Certification Program included the statement: "...to be repaid if possible." Once the program had started, the Steering Committee (the governing body which preceded the Council), decided to strengthen its independence from the AMTA by formally converting the funding to a loan which will be paid back when the program is fully operating.

Protecting National Certification from "undue influence" from any outside source (including the AMTA) is especially important in establishing administrative independence when the program is operating fully. It was felt that if the seed money were paid back, it would remove that indebtedness to the AMTA.

It should be noted that other professional societies and organizations have pledged money to the National Certification Program or have helped with expenses in other ways.



For further information, contact Certification Council Chair George Kousaleos, 223 W. Carolina St., Tallahassee, FL 32301; (904) 222-8673.